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ABSTRACT

ERIC has evolved from a research database into a multi-faceted information system. At the heart of ERIC is the world's largest education database, providing abstracts of more than 850,000 journal articles and documents from a wide range of public and private sources. The system also features a variety of additional products and services designed to put education information into the hands of people who need it. ERIC's goal of reaching diverse audiences, coupled with the rapid advancement of information technologies, has resulted in a larger than ever selection of access points to ERIC, the following of which are discussed in this digest: CD-ROM; online access through commercial services; locally-mounted systems and Internet access; print access; AskERIC; ERIC Digests and other ERIC publications; and ACCESS ERIC. Instructions are provided for acquiring ERIC articles and documents. (Contains 15 references.) (MAS)

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Access Points to ERIC: Update 1995

by Marilyn Smith

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ERIC DIGEST

April 1995

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Access Points to ERIC: Update 1995

by Marilyn E. Smith

Now in its second quarter-century, ERIC has evolved from a research database into a multi-faceted information system serving teachers, administrators, policymakers, researchers, parents, students, and others interested in education. At the heart of ERIC is the world's largest education database, providing abstracts of more than 850,000 journal articles and documents from a wide range of public and private sources. The system also features a variety of products and services "above and beyond" the database, designed to put education information into the hands of people who need it. ERIC's commitment to reaching diverse audiences, coupled with the rapid advancement of information technologies, has resulted in a larger than ever selection of access points to ERIC.

CD-ROM

In 1986, ERIC became the first major bibliographic database marketed on CD-ROM. This technology allows vast quantities of information to be stored on compact disks that are searchable at microcomputer workstations. These systems are designed to be used with little instruction, yet they retain many of the powerful search features of online systems. ERIC CD-ROM products are updated quarterly and sold on a set-fee subscription basis, which makes them a cost-effective option for libraries that offer open access. Often CD-ROM workstations are networked, enabling patrons to search several databases from a single workstation or several patrons to search a single database simultaneously.

Vendors that currently produce ERIC on CD-ROM for IBM and/or Macintosh platforms include CDP Technologies, EBSCO Publishing, ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, Knight-Ridder Information, National Information Services Corporation (NISC), Oryx Press, and SilverPlatter Information.

Online Access through Commercial Services

Originally, access to the ERIC database by computer was through a telecommunications link to a commercial online database vendor. Today ERIC is available from three such vendors: CDP Technologies, Knight-Ridder Information (formerly DIALOG Information Services), and OCLC. This kind of access offers the most powerful and sophisticated search capabilities, the capacity to access the entire database (from 1966 to the latest month) at once, and the ability to execute complex search strategies. The vendors also offer a variety of special services such as a choice of interface appropriate to experience level, professional training, and classroom instruction.

Costs usually include a membership fee and charges based on the number of minutes connected to the service and the number of citations downloaded; fixed fee options also may be available. Generally, an individual wishing to search the ERIC database using an online vendor would do so by going through a library or information service. The institution subscribing to the online service determines fees and access policies for patrons.

Locally-Mounted Systems and Internet Access

An increasing number of institutions, especially universities and state university systems, are mounting the ERIC database on mainframe computers for use by their clientele. The host institution purchases the ERIC data tapes from the ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, selects or develops the search software, and determines access policies. In some cases, the ERIC database is linked to a library online public access catalog (OPAC) and searched with the same interface. In other cases, it is part of a campus wide information system (CWIS).

Recently there has been a trend toward Internet access to OPACs, CWISs, and other electronic resources. Often, remote access to these systems is limited to registered patrons, but some institutions do offer open access to the ERIC database. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology (ERIC/IT) currently is involved in a pilot project to provide online access to the full text of selected ERIC documents.* The ERIC/IT NETWORKER, *Internet Access Points to ERIC*, provides detailed instructions on seven systems that offer unrestricted access to ERIC resources.

Old but Still Good: Print Access

Manual searching of printed indexes, once the only way to access the ERIC database, is still a relatively inexpensive option. Advantages for the patron are that little special training is needed and that the database contents can be browsed easily.

Two monthly abstract journals announce the latest additions to the database: *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)* for journal articles and *Resources in Education (RIE)* for documents (e.g., research reports, conference proceedings, instructional materials, and other non-journal education literature).

For information about subscribing to CIJE, contact the publisher, Oryx Press. RIE subscriptions are managed by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. A microfiche version of RIE, which is issued annually and includes data from 1966 to the current year, is available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS).

Acquiring ERIC Articles and Documents

Patrons of ERIC can obtain copies of journal articles and documents through several sources. Journal articles cited in CIJE are not provided in full text by the ERIC system; patrons may find copies at major public or university libraries or order copies from reprint services such as University Microfilms, Inc. (UMI).

Most documents announced in RIE can be read at the nearly 960 academic and research libraries that hold the ERIC document microfiche collection. EDRS, producer of these microfiche collections, also fills individual orders for ERIC documents in microfiche or paper copy. Orders can be placed directly to EDRS

by mail, telephone, fax, and through the Internet, or placed online during a Knight-Ridder DIALOG or OCLC search. In addition to standing orders and individual orders, EDRS offers the complete microfiche set of over 370,000 ERIC documents and subsets of documents by year and by clearinghouse.

Above and Beyond the ERIC Database

In recent years, the ERIC system has placed increasing emphasis on extending services beyond the well-known ERIC database. The 16 subject-specific ERIC clearinghouses, associated adjunct clearinghouses, and support components engage in many outreach activities to share the expertise gained through database building and partnerships with important organizations in their fields. All clearinghouses offer user services, including question-answering, advice on searching the ERIC database, and workshops.

- **AskERIC.** AskERIC, a special project of ERIC/IT and a finalist for the 1994 Computerworld Smithsonian Award, is an Internet-based service providing education information to teachers, librarians, administrators, policymakers, parents, and others throughout the world. In addition to a question-answering service, AskERIC offers the AskERIC Virtual Library of electronic resources such as lesson plans, ERIC searches on popular topics, AskERIC InfoGuides, and much more.*
- **Publications.** Another way that ERIC components share their knowledge is through publications that synthesize information. The best known product is the ERIC Digest series. Nearly 1,400 ERIC Digests (short reports summarizing "popular topics" in education) produced since 1988 are now available electronically in full text when the ERIC database is searched online or on CD-ROM. A separate file, ERIC Digests Online (EDO), containing the full text of these Digests also is searchable using the Internet.*

  Other ERIC publications include monographs, trends and issues analyses, bibliographies, prepared searches, curriculum support materials, newsletters, and brochures. For information on publications and services, contact the clearinghouse that covers the subject area of interest. A list of all clearinghouses may be obtained from ACCESS ERIC.
- **ACCESS ERIC.** ACCESS ERIC serves as a gateway to the entire ERIC system, answering questions about ERIC products and services and referring patrons to the appropriate clearinghouses. ACCESS ERIC produces several reference and referral directories. Titles include: *Directory of ERIC Information Service Providers, Directory of Education-Related Information Centers*, and *Calendar of Education-Related Conferences*. These resources are sold in print form and also can be accessed online through the Internet.*

  Other ACCESS ERIC products include the Parent Brochure series on such topics as "How Can I Be More Involved in My Child's Education" and "Rights and Responsibilities of Parents of Children with Disabilities"; *The ERIC Review*, a free journal focusing on one educational topic per issue; and the general ERIC publications, *All About ERIC* and *A Pocket Guide to ERIC*.

The Future

ERIC is a dynamic information system, always changing in response to patrons' needs, trends in the field of education, and developing technologies. This Digest provides a snapshot of ERIC today. In the future, look for more ERIC services over the Internet, electronic full-text of ERIC documents, and electronic document delivery.

*Current information on Internet-accessible ERIC resources is available from ERIC/IT.

Sources

ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850-3172, (800)LET-ERIC; (301)251-5264; Internet: acceric@inet.ed.gov

AskERIC, 4-194 Center for Science and Technology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-4100, (800)464-9107; (315) 443-3640; Internet: askeric@ericir.syr.edu

CDP Technologies, 333 7th Ave., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10001, (800)950-2035 ext. 400; (212)563-3006 ext. 400

EBSCO Publishing, 83 Pine St., P.O. Box 2250, Peabody, MA 01960-7250, (800)653-2726; (508)535-8500

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology (ERIC/IT), 4-194 Center for Science and Technology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-4100, (800)464-9107; (315)443-3640; Internet: eric@ericir.syr.edu

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ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), 7420 Fullerton Rd., Suite 110, Springfield, VA 22153-2852, (800) 443-ERIC; (703)440-1400; Internet: edrs@inet.ed.gov

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, 1301 Piccard Dr., Rockville, MD 20850-4305, (800)799-ERIC; (301)258-5500; Internet: ericfac@inet.ed.gov

Knight-Ridder Information, Inc., 2440 El Camino Real, Mountain View, CA 94040, (800)334-2564; (415)254-7000

National Information Services Corp. (NISC), Wyman Towers, Suite 6, 3100 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218; (410)243-0797

OCLC, 6565 Frantz Rd., Dublin, OH 43017-0702, (800)848-5878; (614)764-6000

Oryx Press, 4041 North Central Ave., Suite 700, Phoenix, AZ 85012-3397, (800)279-ORYX; (602)265-2651; Internet: info@oryxpress.com

SilverPlatter Information, Inc., 100 River Ridge Dr., Norwood, MA 02062-5026, (800)343-0064; (617)769-8763

UMI, Article Clearinghouse, 300 North Zeeb Rd., P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, (800)521-0600 ext. 2786; (313)761-4700

U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, (202)521-1800

This ERIC Digest was prepared by Marilyn E. Smith, formerly Database Coordinator for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

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